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UNDER TWO FLAGS

ONE BY ONE THE PARATROOPERS LEAPT FROM THE DAKOTA AIRCRAFT—DOWN TO THE SAVAGE WASTELAND OF THE NORTH AFRICAN DESERT. FOR ONE OF THEM, IT WAS A LEAP INTO THE PAST—A PAST HE PREFERRED TO FORGET. FOR, A FEW YEARS EARLIER, HE HAD FOUGHT IN THAT SAME DESERT WITH A CAVALRY UNIT OF THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION.



Chapter 1. *Treachery!*

IT WAS IN 1937, AS LEGIONNAIRE YORK, THAT PRIVATE DAN MASON HAD FOUGHT ALONGSIDE MEN OF MANY NATIONALITIES AGAINST A BAND OF THE SAVAGE TUAREGS, THE BANDITS OF THE DESERT.

DIE, INFIDEL
DOG!

AAARGH!

THE YOUNG ENGLISHMAN HAD BEEN TOPPLED FROM HIS MOUNT AND WAS WRESTLING IN THE DUST WITH ONE OF THE MERCILESS ARABS, STRIVING TO KEEP THE CURVED DAGGER FROM HIS THROAT.

ACH!

TAKE
THAT!

A DESPERATE BLOW FLUNG THE ARAB BACK AND YORK STAGGERED TO HIS FEET. NEAR HIM, THREE SPANISH LEGIONNAIRES WERE RUNNING TO THEIR HORSES.

THEY ARE
ALL ROUND
US! WE ARE
LOST!

RUN
FOR IT!
RUN!

PANIC AND FEAR HAD SEIZED EVEN THOSE TOUGH LEGIONNAIRES FOR THE TUAREGS WERE TERRIBLE ENEMIES. YORK FLUNG UP HIS CARBINE ...

HALT - OR
I FIRE!

OUT OF
THE WAY,
FOOL!



ONE SPANIARD DROVE HIS HORSE AT YORK IN AN ATTEMPT TO RIDE HIM DOWN, BUT THE ENGLISHMAN LEAPT TO ONE SIDE AND FIRED.



WITH BULLETS HITTING THE SAND AT THEIR HORSES' HOOF, THE TUAREGS MADE OFF INTO THE DESERT. THEN, AS THE LEGIONNAIRES' GUNS CEASED FIRING, A SPANIARD CALLED TO THE SERGEANT...



YORK SUDDENLY REALISED HIS OWN PERIL. NO ONE ELSE HAD SEEN WHAT HAD HAPPENED — AND THE SPANIARDS WERE QUICK TO SNATCH AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE THEIR SKINS.

I TRIED TO STOP HIM — HE SHOT ME! IT IS TRUE — I SWEAR IT!

THEY ARE LYING!
THIS MAN —



SERGEANT MULLER, WHO HAD NO LIKING FOR THE BRITISH, WAS ONLY TOO READY TO ACCEPT THE SPANIARD'S WORD.

SO, THE PROUD ENGLISHMAN TRIED TO DESERT, EH? TIE HIM TO HIS SADDLE, RAMIRAZ! THEN WE RIDE TO THE FORT — AND FAST — BEFORE THOSE DESERT RATS RETURN — OR WE DIE!



AT THE DESERT FORT WHICH WAS THE LEGION UNITS HEADQUARTERS, LEGIONNAIRE YORK FACED A COURT-MARTIAL. IT WAS HIS WORD AGAINST THE LIES OF THE THREE SPANIARDS. EVENTUALLY, MAJOR MARTINEAUX PRONOUNCED SENTENCE . . .



AS YORK SAT IN A DARK CELL THAT NIGHT, AWAITING TRANSPORTATION TO THE PENAL BATTALION AND HARD LABOUR, HE KNEW SOMETHING CLOSE TO DESPAIR.



THEN HIS MOOD CHANGED AS THE WILL TO LIVE ASSERTED ITSELF. DESPERATELY HE PULLED AT THE BARS OF HIS CELL WINDOW AND SCRATCHED AWAY THE TIME-WORN SAND-STONE WITH HIS FINGERS...

ONE BAR FREE! NOW I'VE GOT A CHANCE! IT WILL BE SOME HOURS BEFORE THE GUARD COMES ROUND AGAIN!



LATE THAT NIGHT, WHEN THE FORT WAS STILL AND QUIET, YORK SLID SILENTLY OUT OF HIS CELL. FURTIVELY, HE DODGED THE SENTRIES AND SLIPPED AWAY INTO THE DESERT. HIS HEART WAS BITTER AS HE LOOKED BACK.

THEY WOULD NOT BELIEVE ME — AND NOW I AM TRULY A DESERTER! I OWE THE LEGION NOTHING!



HE STRUCK NORTH TOWARDS THE COAST BUT SOON THE TORRID HEAT SAPPED HIS STRENGTH — AND HE STAGGERED ON AIMLESSLY, NOT KNOWING, OR CARING, WHERE HE WAS HEADING.

CAN'T GO... MUCH FARTHER...



WHEN HE FINALLY COLLAPSED HE WAS LYING ON ONE OF THE OLDEST ROUTES TRODDEN BY MAN — AN ANCIENT CARAVAN TRAIL THAT HAD BEEN USED FOR CENTURIES...



SNATCHED FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH, YORK REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS LATER IN THE TENT OF THE WILY CARAVAN MASTER...



THE CARAVAN MOVED ON ACROSS THE DESERT WITH ITS PRISONER. SLOWLY YORK REGAINED HIS STRENGTH. IT WAS WHEN THE ARABS CAMPED OUTSIDE THE COASTAL TOWN, THEIR DESTINATION. HE MADE HIS SECOND BID FOR FREEDOM. AN ARAB GUARD FELL SILENTLY UNDER THE SAVING BLOW OF HIS FIST...



UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS, HE ENTERED THE TOWN, AND MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE NARROW ARAB STREETS TO THE QUAYSIDE, WHERE HE SWARMED UP THE SIDE OF A SMALL BRITISH CARGO SHIP. HIDING IN A CORNER OF THE HOLD, HE ANXIOUSLY WAITED FOR THE SHIP TO PUT TO SEA...



"GOOD! SHE'S MOVING, AT LAST! WHERE TO, I DON'T CARE! BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE FRENCH NORTH AFRICA AGAIN!"

YORK WAS DISCOVERED ON THE SECOND DAY OUT... AND HE THEN RESUMED HIS TRUE IDENTITY...

STOWAWAY, SIR - SAYS HE'S BRITISH!

THE NAME'S MASON - DAN MASON. ARE YOU BOUND FOR BRITAIN?

SOUTH AMERICA IS OUR NEXT PORT OF CALL, THEN WE SAIL FOR SOUTHAMPTON. I WON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS, MASON - BUT YOU'LL WORK FOR YOUR PASSAGE!

IT WAS JULY, 1939. THE WAR CLOUDS WERE GATHERING AND A FEW DAYS LATER, THE CAPTAIN RECEIVED ORDERS TO MAKE FOR LIVERPOOL. IT WAS THERE THAT MASON STEPPED ASHORE...

WAR? NOT FOR ME! I'M A CIVILIAN FROM NOW ON!

WHEN WAR WAS DECLARED MASON HAD AN EASY JOB IN A WAREHOUSE. THEN SUDDENLY, AS HE SAW MORE AND MORE MEN OF HIS OWN AGE IN UNIFORM, HIS SPIRIT FOR ADVENTURE RETURNED.

TAKE THIS PARCEL DOWN TO WILSONS', WILL YOU? MASON!

SORRY, SIR! I'M LEAVING - GOING TO JOIN THE ARMY!

Chapter 2. *Call to Action*

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN HIS LIFE, MASON FACED A RECRUITING OFFICER...

ANY PREVIOUS MILITARY EXPERIENCE?

NO, SIR.



MASON WANTED TO PUT THE PAST BEHIND HIM, TO OBLITERATE THE MEMORY OF THOSE YEARS IN THE LEGION — BUT IT WAS NOT EASY...

MASON IN FRONT AGAIN. I SEE. GOOD MAN, THAT!

YES, SIR. HE'S DONE THIS KIND OF THING BEFORE, IF YOU ASK ME.



THE REGIMENT WAS TUCKED AWAY IN A QUIET CORNER OF ENGLAND AND GRADUALLY MASON FOUND THE INACTIVITY IRKSOME. OTHER UNITS WENT TO FRANCE AND TO NORWAY, BUT NOT HIS.




AMONG THE PARATROOPERS, MASON FOUND MEN LIKE HIMSELF, MEN WHO WERE ITCHING TO GET TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY. BUT FIRST THEY HAD TO LEARN THIS NEW METHOD OF GOING TO WAR...

ELBOWS IN / FEET AND KNEES TOGETHER / NEXT MAN READY / QUICKLY NOW, QUICKLY!




THEIR PRELIMINARY TRAINING COMPLETED, THEY WENT TO RINGWAY AIRPORT, TO MAKE THEIR FIRST JUMPS...



THAT WAS GOOD, NUMBER ONE! KNEES TOGETHER AND MAKE A GOOD LANDING. GET YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, NUMBER TWO!

TWO JUMPS FROM A BALLOON AND THEY WERE READY TO JUMP FROM AN AIRCRAFT. ALREADY THEY KNEW THE GLORIOUSLY TRIUMPHANT FEELING OF HANGING FROM A PARACHUTE IN SPACE, BUT STILL FOR EACH ONE OF THEM THERE WAS THE SICK FEELING OF DREAD AS THEY WAITED THE ORDER TO JUMP...



RED LIGHT ON! READY, NUMBER ONE?

MY STOMACH'S IN A KNOT—THIS WAITING IS HELL.

THE GREEN LIGHT FLICKED ON AND THE FIRST MAN PLUMMETED OUT. SOON IT WAS MASON'S TURN. HIS STATIC LINE PULLED THE PARACHUTE OPEN AND THE SLIPSTREAM POURED INTO THE SILK...



FOR ALL TOO SHORT A TIME HE FLOATED FREE AND HIS CARES FELL AWAY FROM HIM. THEN THE EARTH CAME RUSHING UP AND IT WAS OVER...

YOU'RE ON,
THIS IS WORTH
CELEBRATING!

ATTA BOY,
MASON! WASN'T
THAT GREAT? I'LL
BUY YOU A MEAL
TONIGHT.



BUT THOUGH HE GOT ON WELL WITH HIS COMRADES, MASON RETAINED A SUBTLE DISTINCTION. THE YEARS OF FIGHTING IN THE DESERT HAD LEFT THEIR MARK...

HEADS DOWN! THOSE ARE REAL BULLETS!

THAT'S MASON IN FRONT, ISN'T IT? GOOD MAN, THAT!



MASON WAS OFFERED PROMOTION TO CORPORAL—AND TURNED IT DOWN. HE COULD NOT EXPLAIN WHY. HE ONLY KNEW THAT HE FELT THE NEED TO HIDE IN THE CROWD, TO BE JUST ONE AMONG MANY...

PITY ABOUT MASON, SERGEANT!

I KNOW THE TYPE, SIR. THINGS COME EASILY TO THEM, TOO EASILY—BUT WHEN THE PRESSURE'S ON, THEY'RE OFTEN THE FIRST TO CRACK.



SERGEANT BLACKBURN WAS A PEACE-TIME SOLDIER — HE HAD BEEN THROUGH DUNKIRK AND EARNED HIS STRIPES THE HARD WAY. HE RESENTED THE WAY IN WHICH MASON HAD REJECTED SOMETHING THAT MEANT SO MUCH TO HIM! ...

DON'T THINK LIFE WILL BE CUSHY IN THE RANKS, MASON. IT'S GOING TO BE TOUGH FOR EVERYBODY — AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR SHARE!

TOUGH? AFTER THE LEGION? HE SHOULD HAVE MET SERGEANT MULLER!




BLACKBURN KEPT HIS PROMISE. HE DROVE HIS PLATOON HARD.

WE DO TWICE AS MUCH TRAINING AS ANYBODY ELSE — AND WHAT FOR I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT FOR, JENKINS, THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL BREWING — AND WE'RE GOING TO BE ON IT!



IT WAS TO BE A COMBINED OPERATION. THEY WERE TO SEIZE AND BRING BACK TO ENGLAND SOME VITAL PIECES OF GERMAN RADIOLOCATION EQUIPMENT. THEY DID NOT KNOW THEIR EXACT DESTINATION — THEY ONLY KNEW THAT THEY WOULD BE STRIKING AGAINST ENEMY-HELD EUROPE . . .




CLOSE TO THE RADIOLOCATION SITE IS A VILLA IN WHICH THERE ARE ABOUT THIRTY GERMANS ON DUTY. WE ARE TO ATTACK THAT BUILDING WHILE THE OTHERS GO FOR THE EQUIPMENT WE NEED.

SOME OF THE MEN WERE ISSUED WITH A NEW WEAPON — THE STEN GUN — A SHORT-RANGE AUTOMATIC THAT WOULD COME IN VERY HANDY AT CLOSE-QUARTERS . . .



DRAW YOUR PARACHUTES MEN, AND THEN YOU'LL GET YOUR FINAL BRIEFING.

FINALLY, THEY WERE TOLD THE NAME OF THEIR TARGET . . .



OUR TARGET IS THE RADIOLOCATION STATION AT BRUNEVAL IN NORTHERN FRANCE. THIS WILL BE THE FIRST ATTACK BY THE PARACHUTE BRIGADE ON GERMAN-HELD TERRITORY — MAKE IT A GOOD ONE!

THE NIGHT WAS CLEAR AS THE TWELVE WHITLEYS CAME IN SIGHT OF THE COAST OF FRANCE. FLASHES OF LIGHT WINKED ON THE GROUND AS THE COASTAL DEFENCES OPENED UP. SMALL BLACK CLOUDS OF FLAK MUSHROOMED ROUND THE AIRCRAFT...



GREEN LIGHTS FLICKED ON AND THE DROP STARTED. AS MASON HUNG SUSPENDED OVER THE SNOW-COVERED LAND HE COULD SEE THE TARGET CLEARLY OUTLINED...



SWIFTLY THE PARATROOPERS DISCARDED THEIR CHUTES AND COLLECTED THEIR WEAPONS. THEN, FORMED UP INTO THE VARIOUS GROUPS. THEY SET OFF FOR THEIR OBJECTIVES.



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AT A SIGNAL TO HIS MEN THE NIGHT SUDDENLY BECAME ALIVE WITH THE STACCATO CRACKLING OF STEN AND RIFLE AND THE THUMP OF EXPLODING GRENADE...

ACHTUNG!
ACHTUNG!
ENGLANDER!



BLACKBURN AND MASON BURST INTO THE REAR OF THE HOUSE. THEY RACED HEADLONG UP THE STAIRS. THE GUARD HAD BEEN ROUSED AND SPEED WAS ALL-IMPORTANT NOW. FROM THE FRONT THEY COULD HEAR THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE AS THE MAJOR AND HIS PARTY FOUGHT THEIR WAY FORWARD...

WATCH IT - WE
DON'T WANT TO KILL
OUR OWN MEN!



MANY OF THE GERMANS IN THE VILLA WERE TECHNICAL STAFF WITH LITTLE STOMACH FOR FIGHTING, BUT ONE OF THE GUARDS - A BULL-NECKED SERGEANT, MADE A DESPERATE ONE-MAN STAND.



EVEN AS HIS FINGER CLOSED ON THE TRIGGER, MASON WAS FROZEN BY THE SIGHT OF THE MAN WHO HAD RULED HIS LIFE IN THE LEGION. FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT, HE AND MULLER STARED AT EACH OTHER...



THEN FROM THE FRONT STAIRS CAME A BURST OF FIRE THAT CUT MULLER DOWN - AND THE BATTLE WAS OVER...

HANDS UP, JERRY - HANDE HOCH!



THE TECHNICAL EXPERTS WHO HAD DROPPED WITH THE PARACHUTISTS WERE ALREADY DISMANTLING THE RADAR APPARATUS AND THE BEACH DEFENCES WERE BEING OVERCOME IN PREPARATION FOR THE GETAWAY...

HOLD IT - CORP'S GOT TO THE PILLBOX. THAT GRENADE WILL FINISH THEM.

LOOK AT HIM - YOU'D THINK HE WAS POSTING A LETTER!



THE VITAL PIECES OF EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN SECURED AND THE BEACH WAS IN THE PARATROOPERS' HANDS. BUT NOW GERMAN FORCES WERE RUSHING TO THE SPOT AS THE LANDING CRAFT NOSED IN, MORTAR BOMBS AND GRENADES STARTED TO LOB DOWN...



AS MASON HUDDLED IN THE LANDING CRAFT WITH HIS COMRADES, HE KEPT SEEING BEFORE HIM THE FACE OF SERGEANT MULLER...



WHEN FRANCE SURRENDERED, MULLER MUST HAVE TRANSFERRED TO THE GERMAN ARMY. WELL, HE DIED FIGHTING—HE'D HAVE WANTED NOTHING ELSE!

HEY, MASON, WAKE UP—HAVE SOME GRUB!

THE OPERATION WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS, BUT AS A RESULT OF IT, PRIVATE MASON FOUND HIMSELF IN FRONT OF CAPTAIN HALLETT.

DID YOU KNOW THAT GERMAN? SERGEANT BLACKBURN TELLS ME YOU CALLED A NAME.

NO, SIR. HE WAS — VERY MUCH LIKE SOMEONE I ONCE KNEW.

CAPTAIN HALLETT STARED HARD AT MASON, THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THIS MAN THAT HE COULD NOT FATHOM...

YOUR HESITATION AT A VITAL MOMENT COULD HAVE BEEN DISASTROUS. IN A FORCE LIKE THIS WE WANT NO WEAK LINKS, MASON. D'YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES, SIR.

WHEN MASON HAD GONE...

I'M SURE MASON CALLED THE GERMAN MULLER, SIR. AND THE GERMAN SEEMED TO KNOW HIM, TOO.

PERHAPS YOU WERE WRONG, SERGEANT. BUT JUST IN CASE, KEEP AN EYE ON MASON!

Chapter 3. *Man from the Past*

LATER THAT YEAR, THE BRIGADE GREW INTO THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT, PART OF THE 1st AIRBORNE DIVISION; AND THEY WERE GIVEN A NEW BADGE AND A NEW TYPE OF HEADGEAR - THE RED BERET...

SUITS YOU, JACK. YOUR MOTHER'S GOING TO BE PROUD OF YOU IN THAT LOT!



BUT AS THE SPIRIT OF THE PARATROOPS BUILT UP AND THEIR COMRADESHIP STRENGTHENED, ONE MAN WAS EXCEPTED. THE STORY OF MASON'S RELUCTANCE TO SHOOT A GERMAN AT BRUNEVAC HAD GOT AROUND AND HE FOUND HIMSELF A MAN APART...



CAME THE AUTUMN — AND ACTION. THE EIGHTH ARMY WON A GREAT VICTORY AT EL ALAMEIN AND WITHIN A WEEK, TWO COMPANIES OF THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT WERE IN DAKOTAS FLYING SOUTH...

OUR DESTINATION IS GIBRALTAR, MEN. AND FROM THERE WE ARE GOING TO JOIN BRITISH AND AMERICAN FORCES THAT HAVE LANDED IN FRENCH NORTH AFRICA.



A BUZZ OF EXCITEMENT SWEEPED THROUGH THE CROWDED PLANE, BUT TO ONE MAN, THE NEWS BROUGHT A SHOCK OF HORROR AND DISMAY...

FRENCH NORTH AFRICA — BUT I'M STILL WANTED THERE — AS A DESERTER!



AT LAST THEY LANDED AT GIBRALTAR WHERE PARATROOPS FROM OTHER UNITS HAD GATHERED.

COR — THE PLACE IS SWARMING WITH 'RED DEVILS'! WONDER WHERE WE GO FROM HERE, DAN?



WE'LL SOON SEE I GUESS!

THAT NIGHT THEY FLEW ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN AND BY THE LIGHT OF THE DAWN LANDED NEAR ALGIERS — ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF THE AMERICAN GROUND FORCES.

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P

NEXT MORNING THEY WERE OFF AGAIN — AND THIS TIME THEY WERE TO DROP INTO ACTION...



THE PLANES CARRIED THEM OVER A BARREN WILDERNESS. AT LAST, OVER A PLATEAU, THE RED LIGHT FLICKED ON AND THEN GAVE WAY TO GREEN. THE 'RED DEVILS' BEGAN TO DROP...



AS THE PARATROOPERS LANDED AND BEGAN COLLECTING THEIR EQUIPMENT, SCATTERED OVER THE PLATEAU, DAN MASON SAW A PARTY OF ARABS COMING TOWARDS THEM. HE SNATCHED UP HIS STEN GUN...

ARABS!



MASON FIRED A WARNING BURST OVER THE ARABS' HEADS AND WAS PROMPTLY DESCENDED ON BY HIS IRATE CAPTAIN...



TO THE CAPTAIN THE FLEEING ARABS LOOKED HARMLESS...



HALLETT'S MEN HAD BEEN THE SECOND STICK TO DROP — THE FIRST STICK HAD BEEN ON THE GROUND FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES — AND ALREADY THEY WERE IN TROUBLE...

MESSAGE FROM
LIEUTENANT JOHNSON, S.R!
WATCH OUT FOR THE ARABS —
THEY'VE STOLEN HALF OUR
PARACHUTES — AND SOME
GUNS AND AMMUNITION
ALREADY!

WHAT...?



THE CAPTAIN FELT THAT HE HAD MADE A FOOL OF HIMSELF AND HIS APOLOGY TO MASON CAME GRUDGINGLY...

YOU WERE LUCKY
THAT TIME, MASON — IT
APPEARS YOU DID THE
RIGHT THING — EVEN
IF IT WAS BY
ACCIDENT!



WHILE THE PARATROOPS REFORMED AND TOOK UP DEFENSIVE POSITIONS CAPTAIN HALLETT SENT OUT A RECCE PATROL UNDER A LIEUTENANT.

NO SIGN OF THE
ENEMY UP AHEAD,
SIR. INTELLIGENCE
SEEM TO HAVE
SUPPED UP.




THE CAPTAIN KNEW THAT IN THE RACE BY BOTH SIDES TO GAIN GROUND IN NORTH AFRICA, THE FARTHER FORWARD HIS FORCE WAS THE BETTER.

SERGEANT, WE'LL MOVE OUT
ACROSS THE DESERT TO THE MOUNTAINS.
THERE WE'LL ESTABLISH DEFENSIVE POSITIONS
AND WAIT FOR THE REST OF THE ARMY
TO CATCH UP WITH US.



THE PARATROOPERS COMMANDEERED MULES AND CARTS FROM THE ARAB VILLAGE, CONSIDERING THEM A FAIR EXCHANGE FOR THE EQUIPMENT THE ARABS HAD STOLEN. THEY LOADED THEIR EXPLOSIVE AND INCENDIARY PACKS, THEIR MORTARS AND ANTI-TANK RIFLES, AND SET OFF ACROSS THE DUSTY WASTELAND...


WALLETT'S MAD.
MOVING US OUT INTO
THE DESERT. IF WE'RE
ATTACKED NOW, WE
WON'T STAND A
CHANCE...



AN HOUR LATER, THE COLUMN WAS MOVING INTO THE FOOTHILLS. SERGEANT BLACKBURN CALLED MASON'S ATTENTION TO A GROUP OF RIDERS IN THE DISTANCE.

LOOK
LIKE ARABS
TO ME!

THEY'RE
LEGIONNAIRES,
SARGE - A CAVALRY
TROOP! THE TOUGHEST
FIGHTERS IN THE
LEGION! I- I'LL TELL
THE CAPTAIN!



WITH A WORRIED FROWN, MASON SLITHERED DOWN THE ROCK AND SCREE OF THE HILLSIDE AND REPORTED. BUT CAPTAIN HALLETT WAS NOT THE LEAST BIT ALARMED...

THE FOREIGN LEGION, EH? I HARDLY THINK THEY'LL ATTACK US, BUT KEEP AN EYE ON THEM.

THEIR SCOUTS WILL HAVE SEEN US, SIR!

HALLETT DID NOT NEGLECT HOWEVER TO PUT HIS MEN IN A STATE OF READINESS. BUT THE WEATHER DID NOTHING TO ALLAY MASON'S ANXIETIES. AS SERGEANT BLACKBURN KEPT WATCH ON THE MOVING COLUMN A WARM WIND SUDDENLY SPRANG UP...

I'VE LOST SIGHT OF THEM! HECK, LOOKS LIKE FOG OUT THERE!

IT'S A SANDSTORM BREWING UP! I RECKON THE CAPTAIN SHOULD CALL A HALT OR DIG IN.

SOON THE WIND-SWEPT SAND WAS FLYING ROUND THE COLUMN AND THE MEN CHOKED AND CURSED. BUT HALLETT ORDERED THEM ON AND MASON GREW MORE WORRIED AT EVERY STEP...

IF THOSE
LEGIONNAIRES ARE
FIGHTING WITH THE JERRIES
— THEY'LL HIT US BEFORE
WE KNOW WHAT'S
HAPPENING!



MASON CAME UP ALONGSIDE HALLETT...

SIR, WE COULD
BE RUNNING INTO AN
AMBUSH! THAT'S THE
FAVOURITE LEGION
TACTIC!

AND NOW
THE DEVIL DO
YOU KNOW THAT,
MASON?



THE EX-LEGIONNAIRE FELT HE HAD TO
TELL THE CAPTAIN OF HIS PAST NOW,
OR HE WOULD NEVER BE CONVINCED OF
THEIR DANGER—AND MEN WOULD DIE...

I WAS
A LEGIONNAIRE
MYSELF ONCE, SIR.
I SERVED IN THE
DESERT!

NEED? THAT
EXPLAINS A FEW
THINGS! HALT,
MEN! HALT!



HALLETT SENSED THAT IT HAD TAKEN A GREAT DEAL TO FORCE THAT ADMISSION FROM MASON — AND IF THE LEGION FORCE WAS HOSTILE, HE COULD NOT TAKE THE RISKS WITH MEN WHO WERE INEXPERIENCED IN DESERT FIGHTING...

UP ON THE RIDGE AND DIG IN, MEN! YOU REALLY THINK THEY'D ATTACK US, MASON?

IF THEIR ORDER IS TO ATTACK, THEN THE LEGION WOULD ATTACK ~~ANYWHERE~~ ON EARTH, SIR.




GIDDAP, THERE!
GIDDAP!

DARKNESS CAME QUICKLY AND WITH IT PENETRATING COLD. AS THE PARATROOPERS SHIVERED IN THEIR HASTILY-DUG SLIT TRENCHES, THE SANDSTORM DIED OUT AND ON THE SILENT NIGHT AIR WAS BORNE THE CLINK OF BRIDLE AND THE PAWING OF HOOFES ON STONY GROUND...



SOUNDS AS IF
MASON WAS RIGHT.
THOSE HORSES AREN'T
SO VERY FAR
AWAY.


DAWN BROKE AND THE PARATROOPERS WERE STARTLED TO SEE THE TROOP OF LEGION CAVALRYMEN DRAWN UP ON THE SKYLINE. ONE OF THEM TROTTED FORWARD, BEARING A WHITE FLAG . . .



A FLAG OF TRUCE? COULD IT BE A TRICK, MASON?

NO, SIR, THEY DON'T GO IN FOR THAT KIND OF GAME.

HALLETT GOT OUT OF HIS TRENCH AND STRODE FORWARD TO MEET THE YOUNG FRENCH OFFICER . . .



LAST NIGHT WE RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT ADMIRAL DARLAN HAS SIGNED AN ARMISTICE TREATY AND ALL FRENCH TROOPS IN NORTH AFRICA HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO CEASE RESISTANCE.

I AM VERY PLEASED TO HEAR IT, LIEUTENANT!

Under Two Flags

HALLETT COULD NOT HELP WONDERING WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE LEGIONNAIRES HAD NOT RECEIVED THAT MESSAGE.

OUR REGIMENT IS NOT FAR AWAY AND WE HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO JOIN THEM. WHO KNOWS? PERHAPS SOON WE SHALL BE FIGHTING ALONGSIDE YOU.

IT WOULD BE A PLEASURE. GOODBYE — AND THANK YOU!

THE HORSEMEN WHEELED AND GALLOPED AWAY.

THE SHOW'S OVER, MEN! GET READY TO MOVE!

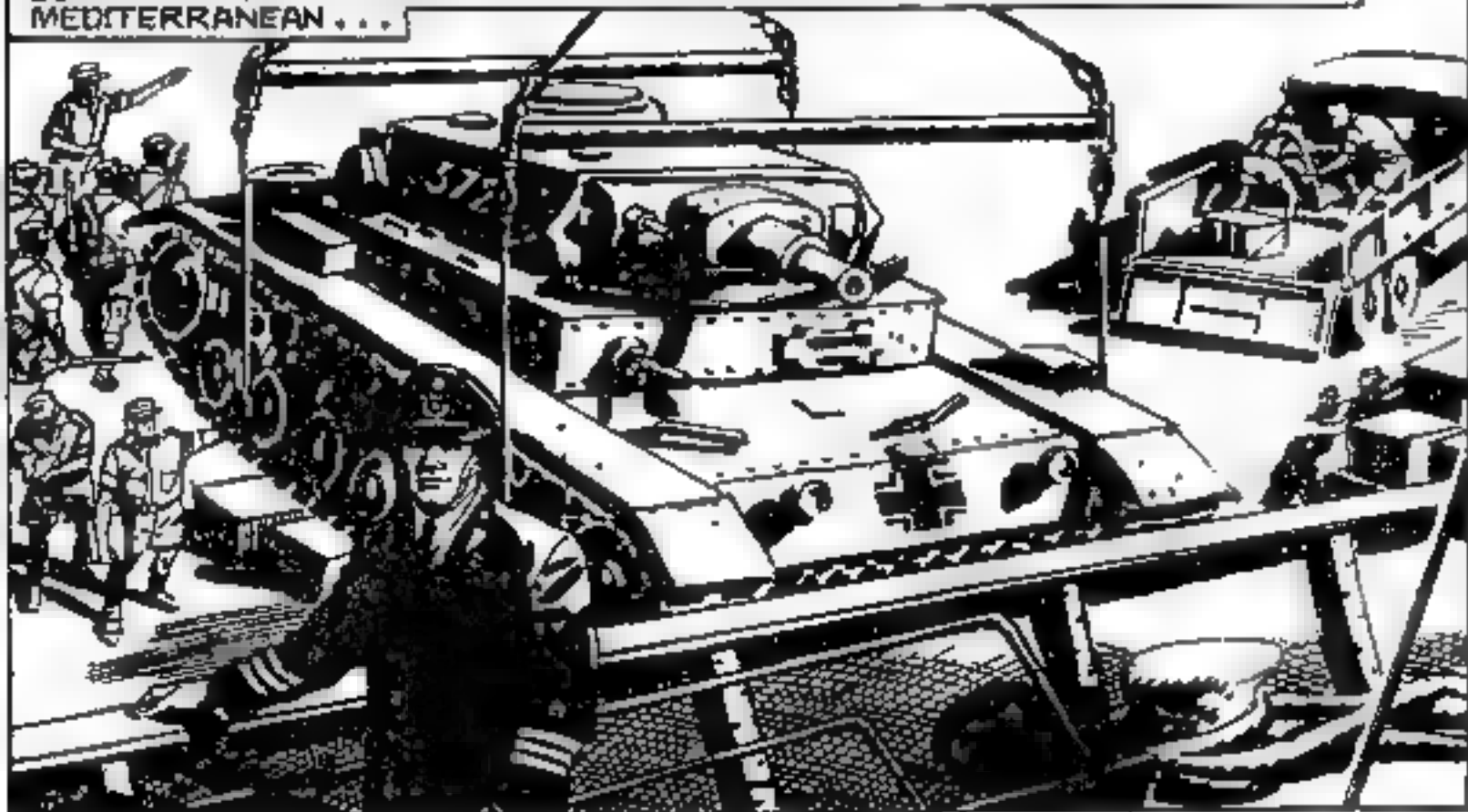
IF THEY'RE OUR ALLIES — HOW WILL THAT AFFECT ME? WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IF HALLETT STARTS ASKING QUESTIONS.

BUT CAPTAIN HALLETT HAD OTHER THINGS ON HIS MIND...

A GERMAN COLUMN OF ARMoured CARS AND LORRIED INFANTRY IS STRIKING WEST AT BOUDNA. INTERCEPT AND DELAY THEM. REINFORCEMENTS WILL...

BOUDNA — THAT'S NORTH OF HERE, IN THE MOUNTAINS.

THE BRITISH FIRST ARMY WAS RACING EASTWARDS IN A BID TO TAKE TUNIS, BUT ALREADY THE GERMANS WERE POURING MEN AND SUPPLIES ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN...



SPEED WAS ALL IMPORTANT AND GERMAN UNITS WENT RACING FORWARD ACROSS THE ONCE NEUTRAL COUNTRY...



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PASSES THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN WERE FEW AND WHOEVER REACHED THEM FIRST WOULD HAVE A TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGE. BUT HALLETT'S FORCE SEEMED ABSURDLY SMALL...

WHAT CAN I DO WITH FIFTY MEN? WE HAVEN'T THE EQUIPMENT TO DEAL WITH GERMAN ARMOUR.

THERE'S CERTAINLY NOT MUCH WE CAN DO BY OURSELVES.



BUT THE PARATROOPERS WERE NOT ALONE...

WIRELESS MESSAGE FROM H.Q., SIR...

FRENCH UNITS ENTERING WAR ON OUR SIDE. UNIT OF FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION SHOULD JOIN YOU WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.



THE NEXT DAY, A LARGE FORCE OF LEGION CAVALRY APPEARED ON THE HORIZON, AND AS THEY RODE IN TO THE COMMANDOS' POSITION, CAPTAIN HALLETT CALLED TO MASON...

MASON —
YOU SPEAK FRENCH —
COME WITH ME.

YES,
SIR!



THE LEGION COLUMN HALTED AND THE FRENCH MAJOR IN COMMAND INTRODUCED HIMSELF IN ENGLISH TO CAPTAIN HALLETT. MASON STOOD TO ATTENTION, HIS FACE PALE — FOR THE FRENCH MAJOR HAD PRESIDED AT HIS COURT-MARTIAL...

AS MAJOR MARTINEAUX
SPEAKS ENGLISH, I WON'T NEED
YOU, MASON. OFF YOU GO!

MASON ?
YOUR FACE —
IT SEEMS...



Chapter 4. *Brave Action*

FORTUNATELY, AT THAT MOMENT, A SIGNALLER DELIVERED A MESSAGE FROM COMMAND - C. ORDERING THE BRITISH AND FRENCH COLUMN TO MOVE OUT IMMEDIATELY AND TAKE UP A DEFENSIVE POSITION IN THE MOUNTAINS.



A GERMAN ARMoured COLUMN IS ALSO ON IT'S WAY TO THE PASS. THEY ARE ABOUT THIRTY MILES AWAY—AND TRAVELLING FAST—WE MUST GET THEIR FIRST!

PARATROOPERS AND LEGIONNAIRES PLUNGED FORWARD TOGETHER, IN A DESPERATE RACE TO OCCUPY AND HOLD THE STRATEGIC POSITION...

GIDDUP!

COME ALONG, MON ENFANT, QUICKLY NOW, OR THE BOCHE WILL BE THERE BEFORE US!



THE ALLIES DID, INDEED, REACH THE PASS FIRST, BUT WITH LITTLE TIME TO SPARE. ALREADY, THE GERMAN ARMOUR HAD BEEN SIGHTED. THEY SET TO WORK IMMEDIATELY, DIGGING IN ON THE MOUNTAIN-SIDES AND LAYING MINES IN THE ROAD.

THE MINES WILL
GIVE THEM PLENTY OF
TROUBLE HERE.

GOOD. WE WILL TAKE UP OUR
POSITIONS NOW. IS IT POSSIBLE
FOR ME TO HAVE PRIVATE MASON
AS A LIAISON, CAPTAIN?



SO IT WAS THAT MASON FOUND HIMSELF TIED TO THE MAN WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS PAST HE MOST FEARED. MARTINEAUX'S QUESTIONS WERE CASUAL AND SEEMINGLY INNOCENT...

HOW LONG HAVE
YOU BEEN IN THE ARMY,
PRIVATE MASON?

I JOINED UP IN
JANUARY, NINETEEN-
FORTY, SIR.



SO IT'S TO
BE CAT AND
MOUSE, IS IT?

MASON KNEW NOW THAT MARTINEAUX HAD RECOGNISED HIM FOR SURE. HE WOULD NOT ESCAPE A SECOND TIME...

AS SOON AS THE BATTLE'S OVER HE'LL CLAIM ME AS A DESERTER AND A CRIMINAL. I MIGHT JUST AS WELL BE KILLED.



CORPORAL, KEEP THE HORSES OUT OF SIGHT - BUT HAVE THEM READY IN CASE WE SHOULD NEED THEM!

LAST MINUTE PREPARATIONS WERE ALMOST COMPLETE...

YOU WILL FIGHT THE ENEMY ALONGSIDE THE LEGIONNAIRES, PRIVATE MASON, IT WILL BE QUITE AN EXPERIENCE FOR YOU, I'M SURE!



ER-YES-SIR!

THEN LOOKOUTS REPORTED THAT THE GERMANS WERE ON THEIR WAY UP THE PASS. SWIFTLY THE FRENCH AND THE BRITISH WENT TO EARTH...

LET'S HOPE THE PROGGIES KEEP OUT OF SIGHT. IF THE JERRIES GUESS WE'RE WAITING FOR THEM THEY'LL STAY OUT OF RANGE AND SHELL US TO BLAZES!



LOUDER AND LOUDER CAME THE RUMBLE OF HEAVY ENGINES, THE CLATTER OF TANK TRACKS, THE OMINOUS NOISES OF AN ADVANCING COLUMN OF ARMOUR ...



BEHIND THE ARMoured CARS, CAME THREE GREAT TANKS, THEIR GUNS POINTING STRAIGHT AHEAD, LOADED AND READY FOR INSTANT ACTION ...

MA FOI / CAN
WE DESTROY SUCH
MONSTERS ?



THEN THE TRAP WAS SPRUNG / A RIFLE SHOT FROM THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE CLAIMED THE FIRST VICTIM...



THEN THE WHOLE COLUMN CAME UNDER FIRE. GRENADES AND ANTI-TANK GAMMON BOMBS RAINED DOWN ON THE GERMAN VEHICLES AND THE PASS ERUPTED INTO A HOLOCAUST OF FLAME AND SMOKE...




ONE ARMOURD CAR, ITS TURRET HATCH SLAMMED SHUT, MADE A DESPERATE DASH FOR THE TOP OF THE PASS...




BUT THE MINES EXPLODED IN A ROAR BENEATH THE WHEELS OF THE ARMoured CAR AND ITS SHATTERED BULK SLEWED SIDEWAYS EFFECTIVELY BLOCKING THE ROAD...

GODD!
THE TANKS WON'T
GET PAST THAT
EASILY!



THE COMMANDER OF THE LEADING TANK HAD BEEN SLOW TO CLOSE HIS TURRET AND IT COST HIM HIS LIFE AS BOMBS RAINED DOWN ON THE TANKS...

GODD SHOT!
HE WON'T BE GOING
ANYWHERE IN A
HURRY.



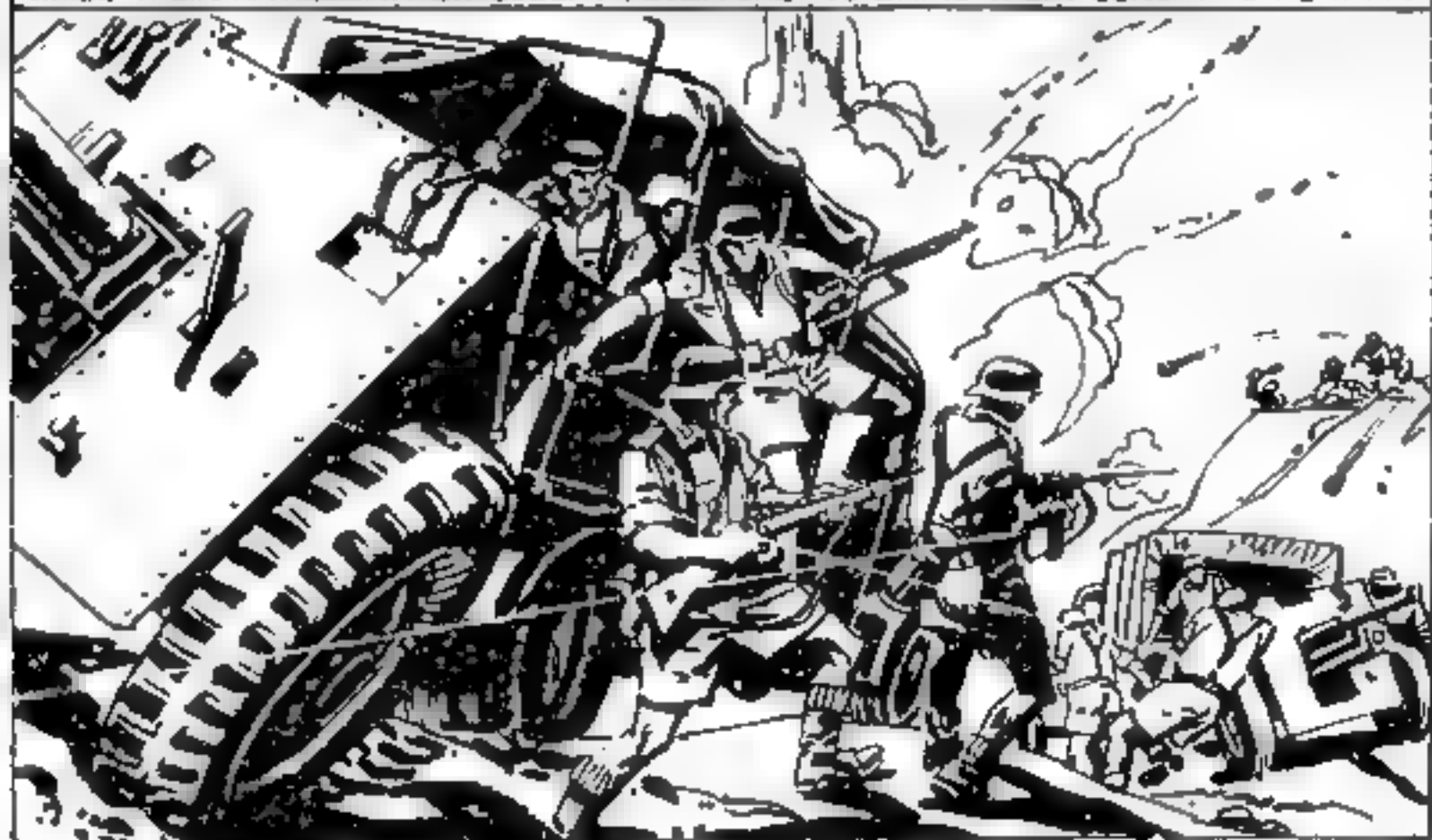
THE FURY OF THE EXPLOSIVES SMASHED ONE OF THE TANK'S TRACKS AND IT RAN BACKWARDS, CRASHING INTO THE TANK COMING UP BEHIND...

HE'S DONE FOR!
THE SECOND ONE
TOO - HE CAN'T
MOVE NOW!

WITH ITS FIELD OF FIRE UP THE PASS BLOCKED AND WITH ITS TRACKS JAMMED SO THAT IT COULD NOT MOVE, THE SECOND TANK WAS A SITTING TARGET...



THE GERMAN INFANTRY LEAPED FROM THEIR LORRIES, DESPERATELY SEEKING COVER, WHILE THEIR ARTILLERYMEN SOUGHT FEVERISHLY TO BRING THEIR GUNS INTO PLAY...



ON THAT NARROW MOUNTAIN ROAD THERE WAS NO ROOM TO MANOEUVRE AND WHEN ONE OF THE GUNS WAS BACKED ON TO THE SLOPE, ITS WEIGHT DRAGGED ITS TOWING LORRY DOWN WITH IT TO DISASTER...



FARTHER DOWN THE PASS, THE LEGION SHARPSHOOTERS WERE ENJOYING TARGET PRACTICE . . .



FROM ANOTHER SLOPE OF THE MOUNTAIN, THE LOWER NAUFRONS WERE THUMPING THEIR BOMBS DOWN ON TO THE LOWER STRETCHES OF ROAD, PUTTING UP A CURTAIN OF FLYING STEEL FRAGMENTS THROUGH WHICH THE GERMANS MUST PASS BEFORE THEY COULD ESCAPE.



BUT NOW THE INITIAL SHOCK OF THE AMBUSH WAS OVER. ISOLATED GROUPS OF GERMANS HAD FOUND COVER AND WERE FIGHTING BACK, AND THE THIRD TANK, SHELTERED BY OVERHANGING ROCK WAS IN ACTION, ITS HEAVY GUN A VERY POTENT FORCE . . .



THE BATTLE HUNG IN THE BALANCE NOW. THE AIR WAS THICK WITH SMOKE AND FLAME AND ECHOED WITH THE CRACKLE OF THE BRENS AND THE HARSHER CRACK OF THE ANTI-TANK RIFLES. BUT ABOVE EVERYTHING, SOUNDED THE EXPLOSIVE ROAR OF THE TANK'S EIGHTY-EIGHT MILLIMETRE...

WE MUST
SILENCE THAT TANK!
FOLLOW ME!

YOU
HAVEN'T GOT
A HOPE SIR!

HE'S
RIGHT - WE'VE
GOT TO TRY!

BULLETS FROM BOTH SIDES WHIPPED ABOUT THE THREE MEN AS THEY RACED OUT INTO THE OPEN...

AGH!
I'M HIT!

THEY'VE
SEEN US!

ALREADY, THE TURRET OF THE TANK WAS SWINGING URGENTLY TOWARDS THEM...

ACHTUNG!
ACHTUNG! TRAVERSE
RIGHT! TRAVERSE
RIGHT!



AS MASON LET FLY WITH HIS STEN IN THE DESPERATE HOPE THAT A BULLET MIGHT FIND THE VISION SLIT, MARTINEAUX HURLED AN ANTI-TANK GRENADE AND AT THE SAME MOMENT, THRUST THE PARATROOPER OUT OF THE LINE OF FIRE.



FRAGMENTS FROM THE EXPLODING BOMB RAINED ROUND MASON AND THE EARTH SHOOK BENEATH HIM . . .

WHY ■■■ HE DO THAT? HE MUST WANT ME ALIVE SO THAT HE CAN COURT MARTIAL ME AGAIN.

THE BOMB HAD PUT THE TANK'S MACHINE GUN OUT OF ACTION — AND THOUGH THE BIG GUN WAS STILL OPERATING THE TWO MEN NOW HAD A CHANCE . . .



THE PANZER COMMANDER HAD REALISED THE DANGER, AND AS THE TWO MEN CLOSED IN ON THE TANK, HE FLUNG OPEN THE TURRET HATCH.

FOR PETE'S SAKE, THROW THAT GRENADE, SIR!



BUT IT WAS MASON'S GUN THAT FOUND ITS MARK FIRST...



THEN THE A.T. TANK GRENADE EXPLODED AGAINST THE ROCK FACE AND VICIOUS PIECES OF STEEL AND STONE RAINED DOWN ON BOTH THE PANZER — AND ITS ATTACKERS...



MASON'S SENSES RETURNED AS OTHER LEGIONNAIRES WERE MARSHALLING THE STILL STUNNED TANK CREW...



THE SILENCING OF THE TANK HAD BROKEN THE GERMAN RESISTANCE. THEY WERE RETREATING NOW, SALVAGING WHAT THEY COULD FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THEIR FORCE...

THEY HAVE
BROKEN - IT IS
ALL OVER!



MASON'S FACE PALED. HIS FEET - SO
CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AT LAST.

MARTINEAUX
REMEMBERS ME
... AND NOW HE'S
GOING TO LET ME
KNOW THAT HE
REMEMBERS...



MAJOR MART NEAUX TURNED TO THE
BRITISH SOLDIER BESIDE HIM...

YOU ARE
ACQUAINTED WITH
THE HISTORY OF
LEGIONNAIRE YORK,
I BELIEVE...

YES, MAJOR, I WAS
LEGIONNAIRE YORK —
COWARD — DESERTER —
AND ESCAPED
CRIMINAL!



BUT YOU DO NOT
KNOW THE END OF YORK'S
STORY, MASON. THE THREE
SPANIARDS WHO ACCUSED HIM
WERE SERVING IN AN OUTLYING
FORT WHEN AN OUTBREAK OF
FEVER WIPED OUT THE GARRISON.
MY COLUMN ARRIVED AS THE
LAST ONE — RAMIRAZ —
WAS DYING...



MARTINEAUX GAZED INTO THE DISTANCE.
HE WAS THINKING OF THAT LONELY
OUTPOST — THE LAST WORDS OF A MAN
TRYING TO EASE HIS CONSCIENCE...

HE TOLD ME THE TRUTH.
HOW THE SPANIARDS HAD
STARTED TO RUN. HOW
YORK HAD TRIED TO STOP
THEM. HOW THEY HAD
ACCUSED YORK IN ORDER
TO SAVE THEMSELVES.
THEN RAMIRAZ —
DIED.



A GREAT WEIGHT SUDDENLY SEEMED TO LIFT FROM MASON'S SHOULDERS...

THE LEGION DID WHAT IT COULD TO MAKE AMENDS. YORK'S CONVICTION WAS REMOVED FROM THE RECORDS AND IN RECOGNITION OF HIS BRAVERY, HE WAS AWARDED THE CROIX DE GUERRE. BUT WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL TO KILL A LEGIONNAIRE, SIR — YOU HAVE SAID SO YOURSELF!



MARTINEAUX DID NOT OFTEN SMILE — BUT HE SMILED THEN...

LEND ME YOUR SHOULDER — AND TAKE ME TO YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER. THE RECORD MUST BE PUT STRAIGHT!



SO THE HISTORIES OF PRIVATE MASON AND LEGIONNAIRE YORK BECAME ONE — ONE OF BRAVERY AND HONOUR, A CREDIT TO THE FIGHTING TRADITIONS OF BOTH THE BRILLIANT FORCES HE HAD SERVED.



FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE PARATROOPS WERE OFTEN TO BE FOUND UNITS OF THE FOREIGN LEGION AND, TOGETHER, THESE TWO PLAYED A GREAT PART IN THE DEFEAT THAT THE GERMANS SUFFERED IN TUNISIA.

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